

# Unit – 1 | Introduction to Social Psychology (Handout 2)

## Models of Human Behaviour

**Psychoanalytic Model:** Freudian approach depends on conflict model of humans. By using clinical techniques of free association and psychotherapy Freud felt that behaviour is not always consciously explained. "Unconscious" is the major factor which guides the individual's behaviour. Freud felt that the individual's behaviour depends on three factors:

- (i) Id,
- (ii) Ego and
- (iii) Super ego.

**Id:** By Id it means pleasure. To certain degree of having Id in an individual is constructive but may also lead to destructive tendencies like being aggressive, dominating, fighting and generally destroy. This kind of instinctive is more dominating in childhood. But once individuals develop and mature they learn to control the id. But it is always unconscious.

Throughout life the 'id' becomes important source of thinking and behaving.

**Ego:** Ego represents 'conscious' stage in one's behaviour. Though Id comes in conflict with ego, the ego depends on the super ego.

**Superego:** It represents "conscience". An individual is not aware of the superego's functioning. The conscience is dependent on two factors that is cultural values and moral of a society. Superego's development depends mostly on parent's influence. Once the child grows up the child will unconsciously identifies with parents value and morals.

There is always tussle between id, ego and superego. The degree of each of them varies from person to person. So the variations in individual's behaviour can be better understood with the help of this model.

But the modern theories have severely criticised this theory as it is not based on any empirical facts and as such it can not be accepted in totality. But the concept of "unconscious" is a significant contribution in understanding specific behaviour of humans.

### **Existential Model:**

This model is not scientifically based. Its base is literature and philosophy.

The existentialists believe that the depersonalising effects of this environment forces individuals to make their own destiny. So the individuals shape their own identity and make their "existence" meaningful and worthwhile to themselves.

This is more true and happening in today's urbanisation. Because people have become so materialistic and busy, they do not have time for traditional values and norms and it becomes impractical sometimes to follow them. Existential model is, especially true when you are employed in today's world.

Though this model is not scientific it can be definitely be used in understanding human behaviour.

### **Internal vs. External Determinants of Behaviour**

Environment plays a major role in shaping behaviour and genetic endowment and personality development is influenced by our historical heritage.

### **Personality vs the Environment**

Both personality and situational variables must be taken into account in order to explain an individual's behaviour but a focus on the environment is as important or perhaps slightly more important than focusing on personality traits.

### **Cognition vs the Environment**

To understand one's behaviour all we have to know is the individual's past responses to similar (stimulus) situations and the rewards or punishments that followed that response.

There are two models which come out of these approaches:

**Behaviouristic Model:** In this model the behaviour is dependent on two factors i.e., stimulus and response. Learning occurs with this kind of model. Pavlov and Watson with their research felt that behaviour can be best understood by stimulus and response.

Behaviourist model is represented as: S - R (Stimulus-Response)

**Cognitive Model:** S-OR-R. This model emphasises the positive and free-will factors of human beings and uses concepts such as expectancy, demand and incentive.

Tolman with his experiments found that the basis of learning as of 'expectancy' which is understood as one particular event leading to a particular consequence i.e., goal. Human behaviour is based on these goals.

The cognitive model is represented as: S - O - R (Stimulus-Organism-Response model)

Both approaches see learning and the environment as having a major impact on behaviour.

From these different approaches it can be said that:

1. Behaviour is caused by instincts, genetic background and personality traits that are formed at an early age. Change is very difficult for the individual and that one's capacity is severely limited.
2. Behaviour is mostly learned through our interactions with the environment. Present events rather than past events are important. Even though there are some limitations on one's capacities, one is capable of great amounts of change.

## **Approaches towards Understanding Social Behavior**

### **Perception and Learning:**

Social behaviour, in general, involves a complex interaction of learning, perception, motivation and other processes. The fact that most people behave similarly in similar social situations indicates that to a large extent, social perceptions are shared, and social learning experiences and processes are also shared.

Most people in a society tend to perceive others in a similar manner. For example, all of us can tell when somebody is angry and similarly when somebody is sad. Thus, one can see the inter-relationship between learning and perception.

Given similar situations the fact that most people learn to behave alike in similar situations provides the basis for sharing similar perceptions. Thus, it may be seen that to a large extent, our perceptions in a social situation are rendered similar because of the process of common perception and learning resulting from uniform socialisation.

In this context, one may refer to the term stereotyping, which refers to the mechanism by which people come to perceive things in a more or less stable and consistent manner. Thus, our perception of others and also of social events, acquires a certain degree of stability. Stereotypes are, in other words, stable mental pictures.

Of course, sometimes stereotypes also result in undesirable social behaviour. Many forms of social prejudices provide examples of this kind. Thus, people tend to perceive members of other nations, religions and communities in a fixed manner, invariably attributing various stereotyped qualities to them.

For example, people belonging to the working-class look at industrial magnates as exploitative, greedy and luxury loving and tend to ignore individual differences. On the other hand, industrialists tend to perceive the working class as lazy, cheeky, aggressive, etc. Such stereotypes then, explain how people attribute different qualities and traits to themselves and to others.

In recent years, this attribution behaviour has been the subject of extensive research and enquiry. There are certain other basic psychological mechanisms like sympathy and empathy, which also come into operation during social behaviour.

The term sympathy refers to the process by which one is able to share the perceptions, feelings, reactions and experiences of others. The term empathy refers to the process by which one is able to totally experience events as experienced by others.

One may see a complex interplay of perceptual processes and learning processes in social behaviour. In this context, one may also refer to another term, reference groups.

Social perception and social learning always take place within the context of the norms and expectations of particular groups which provide a frame for the validation of one's own social behaviour. For example, members of the working-class perceive a legislation according to the norms and values of the labour unions. Similar is the process among owners and managers who have their own reference groups.

The existence of reference groups explains how group differences emerge in social perception and social behaviour. Many conflicts such as those between older people and younger people, workers and managers, arise out of these differences.

This is how we often see the ironical situation wherein, the same event or issue is interpreted differently by different groups of people, showing that the same objective reality can be experienced as different psychological and phenomenological realities.

### **Social Motivation:**

Social behaviour is brought about by almost all the motives inherent in human nature.

Even basic physiological motives such as hunger and thirst depend for their satisfaction on others, especially in the case of infants. Initially social behaviour is acquired in the context of satisfaction of basic motives.

Subsequently, however, motives of an essentially social nature such as belongingness, acceptance, status, etc. come into operation as potent driving forces behind behaviour and much of our social behaviour comes to be governed by these motives.

The power and the affiliation motives are by their very nature dependent on social situations for their satisfaction. To a large extent, these motives are acquired during the process of socialisation and subsequently they influence the acquisition of social behaviour.

Thus, it may be seen that as the individual grows older, social learning and social behaviour come directly under the influence of social motives. Each society or culture contributes differently to the development of these social motives. Thus, in some societies the affiliation motive emerges as being stronger, while in other societies the power motive emerges as stronger.

Motives like affiliation and power express themselves in different forms in different social settings. In some societies the power motive finds expression in acquiring wealth and power

and in some other societies expresses itself through the acquisition of spiritual power and in still some other societies through the acquisition of physical power.

The society, therefore, sets both motivational and behavioural norms. Here, again we see the reciprocal and intricate relationships among perceptual, learning and motivational processes in social behaviour.

### **Norms or Expected Standards:**

The factor which influences and motivates behaviour in social situations is the stipulation of accepted ways and types of behaviour. For example a person born in a rural area, on reaching a foreign country, very soon acquires the new ways of dressing, eating and talking. Every society prescribes norms for different types of behaviour. Norms can be very rigid or flexible.

The experiments performed by Asch illustrate how individual behaviour moves in the direction of group averages or standards. Norms evolve gradually in groups as a result of continuous interaction. They provide the means by which a member's behaviour can be evaluated by the group. Continuous failure to reach the norms or conform to the norms may result in the individual being rejected by the group.

On the other hand, proven readiness to conform to group norms or standards leads to increase in the acceptance of the individual by the group. Table manners, eloquence in speech, etc. are examples of societal norms. Norms are not static, they change depending on a number of factors. As the group expands and acquires new experiences, norms are constantly evaluated and revised.

### **Attitudes and Values:**

Our use of the term behaviour has been in a very broad sense. It is not the intention of this article to use this term to mean only actual motor actions. Perhaps, social response would be a more suitable term. Our response to social situations, issues and people can be of different categories.

Sometimes, it involves actual behaviour. If you meet a friend on the road, you greet him. On the other hand, if you find a man dressed in a very peculiar manner you just express your disapproval or surprise. Similarly, if there is an opinion poll as to whether sixteen year olds should be allowed the right to vote, you either agree or disagree.

The above examples are illustrations of opinions. In some societies people believe that one should not work on Sundays and in other societies Wednesdays or Fridays are auspicious days. These are examples of beliefs.

Many of us believe that democracy is the best form of government or that movies corrupt young minds. These are examples of attitudes. It may be seen that opinions, beliefs and attitudes are our responses or reactions to people, events, things and issues of social relevance and significance. Each one of us has certain opinions, beliefs and attitudes.

Of all these different categories, attitudes have the most extensive influence on our behaviour. People have attitudes on a variety of issues, ranging from specific to general. Thus, people have attitudes towards religion, democracy, war, other people and in fact towards almost everything under the sun. Inter-group prejudices such as racialism, class prejudices, etc. are nothing but a cluster of attitudes.

Attitudes can be favourable or unfavorable. Thus, we have favourable attitudes towards some issues and very unfavorable attitudes towards others. Such attitudes influence our social behaviour. They determine the way we perceive social reality, the emotions with which we react and also the actual behaviour which we exhibit.

If we have an unfavorable attitude towards a particular group of people, we perceive them in a bad light, experience annoyance, anger and perhaps even hatred and finally react in a negative or hostile manner, either avoiding them or getting them out of our way. It will now be obvious to the reader how influential attitudes are, in determining our behaviour.

An attitude may be defined as an acquired and enduring predisposition to perceive a particular class of objects or persons in a favourable or unfavorable manner. Attitudes are entirely learnt and acquired from experiences and interactions in the social environment. Our attitudes are shaped and nurtured by other human beings as well as movies, magazines, newspapers, T.V., literature, etc. Myths and epics play a very crucial role in shaping our attitudes.

It has been shown by a number of studies that very young children are devoid of social attitudes such as prejudices (caste, class or race), but they acquire them very soon. Such attitudes serve a number of psychological functions.

They facilitate the sharing of perceptions and behaviour, they make it easy to identify oneself with other members of one's reference groups and above all they make it easy for the individual to perceive others and respond to them. They help to give a clear guideline, and structure to a situation.

Thus, psychologically they are very comforting, but unfortunately often such attitudes make our behaviour and response rigid and unrealistic. They tend to take us away from actual reality. In extreme cases this can make the person totally blind and insensitive to glaring facts and thereby cause disappointment, frustration, stress and other unfavorable consequences.

Attitudes tend to get stabilized and become systematic. They also tend to get generalized. For example, our dislike for one particular social group may get generalized into a dislike of all other social groups. For example, a particular political party may come to believe that all other parties are not patriotic and infuse hatred or dislike for them among the people.

This may result in a very narrow, self-deceptive attitude of the superiority of one's own group. Terms like ethnocentrism are used to describe such a situation. In more extreme forms this expresses itself as fanaticism. How often fanaticism results in the failure to perceive reality, distortion of reality, denial of reality and even fabrication of reality needs no elaboration.

Psychologically the resulting condition is one of closed mindedness, rigidity, lack of sensitivity to things around, irrationality and in short an almost pathological mental condition. An extreme form of the authoritarian personality is characterised by the above conditions.

In view of the above, it is absolutely necessary that one should always be aware of the influence of one's attitudes on our behaviour. Our attitudes should be checked and tested against reality.

These attitudes depend on the educational process. An educational system, which is purely verbal and isolated from reality is conducive to the growth of rigid and over-determining values. This is the reason why we talk of experiential learning.

### **Measurement of Attitudes:**

Attitudes constitute an important factor in determining our behaviour. Behaviour patterns are clearly related to attitude patterns. Understanding people's attitudes will help us to understand and even predict behaviour. In view of this, psychologists have developed a number of techniques by which attitudes can be measured.

It has been shown that by employing these techniques, it is possible to measure the attitudes of people with a considerable degree of accuracy and dependability. Most of these techniques make use of certain verbal statements or questions requiring people to express their degree of agreement or disagreement.

These techniques are usually termed as attitude scales. Psychologists have, over the years, achieved a great deal of sophistication and scientific refinement in developing these techniques. It is not necessary at this point to go into details of these different techniques.

Some of the important techniques developed are Thurstone's technique of equal-appearing intervals, Likert's technique of summated rating, Guttman's technique of scalogram analysis, Bogardus social distance scale and so on. These techniques are named after the particular approaches employed to study attitudes or after the persons who introduced them.

**Sample of items used in the scale. Attitude of adolescents towards sex education, 1980.**

1. *Sex education encourages adolescents to indulge in sexual malpractices such as prostitution, homosexuality.*  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Disagree strongly.
2. *Sex education should be included in the curriculum in all colleges.*  
Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Disagree strongly.
3. *It is a waste of time to teach sex education in colleges.*  
Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Disagree strongly.
4. *Sex education can remove the anxieties related to physical changes of the body during puberty such as menstruation, voice change.*  
Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Disagree strongly.

**FIG. 20.2** *Likert's technique of summated rating*

- Item indicate the extent of relationship.
- Would willingly admit a foreigner
1. To close kinship by marriage
  2. To stay at my home as my guest
  3. To my house as a personal friend
  4. To my street as my neighbour

**FIG. 20.3** *Bogardus social distance scale. The respondents should indicate the degree of relationship he or she prepared to enter into.*

**Attitude Change:**

In recent years, psychologists, particularly social psychologists, have devoted much attention for devising strategies and methods of changing attitudes. Many programmes of social change and development fail to succeed because the people involved do not have favourable attitudes towards these.

For example, supervisors in factories often have fixed attitudes towards workers in general and vice-versa. This often results in mutual hostility and conflict. Solutions to such problems depend on the ability to bring about changes in attitudes.

In view of this, attitude change has become an important area for research and action by psychologists. Several methods such as lectures, movies, interpersonal discussion, confrontations, etc. are employed.

Some important areas where attitude changes have assumed importance, especially in our country, are the areas of family planning, and the use of modern methods of agriculture by farmers. Techniques of attitude change are often classified into individual techniques and group techniques, direct techniques and indirect techniques.

Clinical psychologists also find these areas important in changing people's attitudes towards psychological abnormalities. Many people do not want to send the mentally ill to psychiatrists or clinical psychologists because of a possible social stigma.

All these examples clearly illustrate the powerful role of attitudes and more so the importance of changing them. Attitudes are often mistaken for wisdom, forgetting the fact that they are highly subjective, unrelated to facts and irrational. While it is not possible or even desirable to prevent attitude formation, attitudes, like race horses, should be kept in check.

### **Values:**

Yet another term frequently used in social psychology and of relevance in understanding social behaviour is the term value. Values are similar to attitudes since they also influence behaviour, both social and non-social. They are also acquired as a result of learning and experience.

Like attitudes they also influence our perception, affective responses and even our actual behaviour. But at the same time they differ from attitudes. While attitudes always exist in relation to specific groups of people, objects, events, etc., values are much more general. They are more abstract and general and cover a wide variety of objects, events, and people.

Attitudes always refer to some external groups, objects or practices; values, on the other hand, are more like general guiding principles for life. They provide basic principles guiding large segments of our behaviour. In fact, people tend to develop specific value systems, which provide a consistent frame to behaviour in most situations.

Thus, one may talk of conservative values or liberal values. A conservative individual develops attitudes to different issues and events marked by conservatism. Thus, one can talk of economic values, political values, and so on. Years ago Allport attempted to measure values by developing a tool.

He attempted to measure types of values-theoretical, religious, economic, political and aesthetic. Allport attempted to measure all these values and also study the order of dominance in them. Yet, another attempt was made by the well-known anthropologist Kluckhohn. In recent years, Myers Briggs has made another such attempt.

Values play a very important role in the life of an individual and in society. They are the source or fountainhead, which provide a meaningful way of ordering one's reactions and responses. This way they often help in minimising and preventing internal conflicts and also raising the ability of an individual to tolerate frustrations and disappointments.

The reader may wonder as to what is the relationship between attitudes and values. In one way, values appear to be very general attitudes determining our responses to many kinds and classes of events, objects and people. On the other hand, it is also possible to look at attitudes as derivatives from values.

Perhaps, this is only intellectual hair-splitting. From a practical point of view this distinction is probably not very crucial. However, one more distinction may be made-values are in general 'end-directed or goal-directed'. They indicate what we are looking for or what we want to achieve, whereas attitudes usually refer to external objects or events.

Thus, values are, to a large extent, goal-related, whereas attitudes are stimulus-related. It may be seen that values cut across stimulus situations and thereby help to integrate and lend a perspective to our reactions.

The absence of values often results in inconsistent and even anarchic behaviour. In fact, social scientists and philosophers have often pointed out that many social problems today are the result of a failure to develop proper values or, for that matter, any value at all.

Attitudes and values, therefore, constitute important motivating factors in our life, particularly in social behaviour. They determine our perception, emotional experience and also the ultimate response. They give consistency, predictability and stability to behaviour. Thus, they almost become stable parts of an individual's personality.

They play a very important role in the process of socialisation and in transforming the biological into a social adult. They are acquired through the process of socialisation and, at the same time, influence the process of socialisation itself. Every society or culture tends to project some dominant values or attitudes. The western societies are often characterised as being materialistic and the eastern societies as spiritual and religious.

While one may not agree totally with such generalisations the fact remains that attitudes and values play a very crucial role in social integration. Their importance as motivators of human action is amply borne out by examples of martyrdom in history where people have laid down their lives for the sake of their cherished values. Socrates, Abraham Lincoln and Galileo are a few of the many such individuals who became martyrs for a cause.

Values are so embedded that it can be inferred from people's behaviour and their expressed attitudes. But values are a strong force in people. What may 'appear' to be strange behaviour in an employee can make sense if managers understand the values underlying that behaviour.

Rokeach (1973) "values represent basic convictions that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence."

Rokeach divided values into two broad categories: 'Terminal values' relate to ends to be achieved e.g. comfortable life, family security, self-respect and sense of accomplishment. 'Instrumental values' relate to means for achieving desired ends, e.g. ambition, courage, honesty and imagination. Terminal values reflect what a person is ultimately striving to achieve, whereas instrumental values reflect how the person get there.

Values are so embedded that it can be inferred from people's behaviour and their perception, personality and motivation. They generally influence behaviour. They are relatively stable and enduring. This is because, the way in which they are originally learned.

Allport (1951) identified six types of values.

- Theoretical - Places high importance on the discovery of truth through critical and rational approach.
- Economic - Emphasises to be useful and practical.
- Aesthetic - Places the highest value on form and harmony.
- Social - The highest value is given to the love of people.
- Political - Places emphasis on acquisition of power and influence.
- Religious - Concerned with the unity of experience and understanding of the cosmos as a whole.

### **Personality:**

Gordon Allport defined Personality as the dynamic organisation within the individual of those Psycho-Physical Systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment.

Personality can be described more specifically as "how a person affects others, how he understands and views himself and his pattern of inner and outer measurable traits."

From this definition, it can be understood one's physical appearance and behaviour affects others. Understanding oneself means one is unique with a set of attitudes and values and a self-concept. Finally, the pattern of measurable traits refers to a set of characteristics that the person exhibits.

Some of the other definitions are "Personality is a vehicle to integrate perception, learning, values and attitudes and thus to understand the total person." "Personality is an individual's total sense of self, it is an organising force for the persons particular pattern of exhibited traits and behaviours." "Personality is the culmination of experiences and genetic influences." Personality is influenced by the personal life and where he is working.

## **Determinants of Personality:**

Personality is the result of both heredity and environment and also the situation.

### **Heredity**

Heredity refers to those factors that were determined at conception. Physical appearance, temperament, energy level and biological rhythms are the characteristics which are generally influenced by one's Parents' i.e., One's Biological, Physiological and Inherent Psychological Make up. The Heredity approach feels that personality of an individual is the Molecular Structure of the genes, located in the chromosomes.

### **Environment**

Culture plays an important role in the formation of personality, i.e., early conditioning, the norms among the family, friends and social groups. With the socialisation process in the group, personalities are altered over time.

### **Situation**

Though an individual personality is constant, it does change depending on the situation. Different demands in different situations call forth different aspect of one's personality.

The relationship of these three factors affects the formation and development of Personality. Psychological inheritance is entirely an internal contribution. Group and culture are the early environmental factors that form later behaviour. Family and social setting during the early stages of education are the important factors which influences the initial formation of personality. Whatever the child learns here lasts for life time. Later in life, it is the Peer groups or Primary affiliations at work, social activities which shape the Personality.